

# anarchist fortnightly

# Freedom

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50p



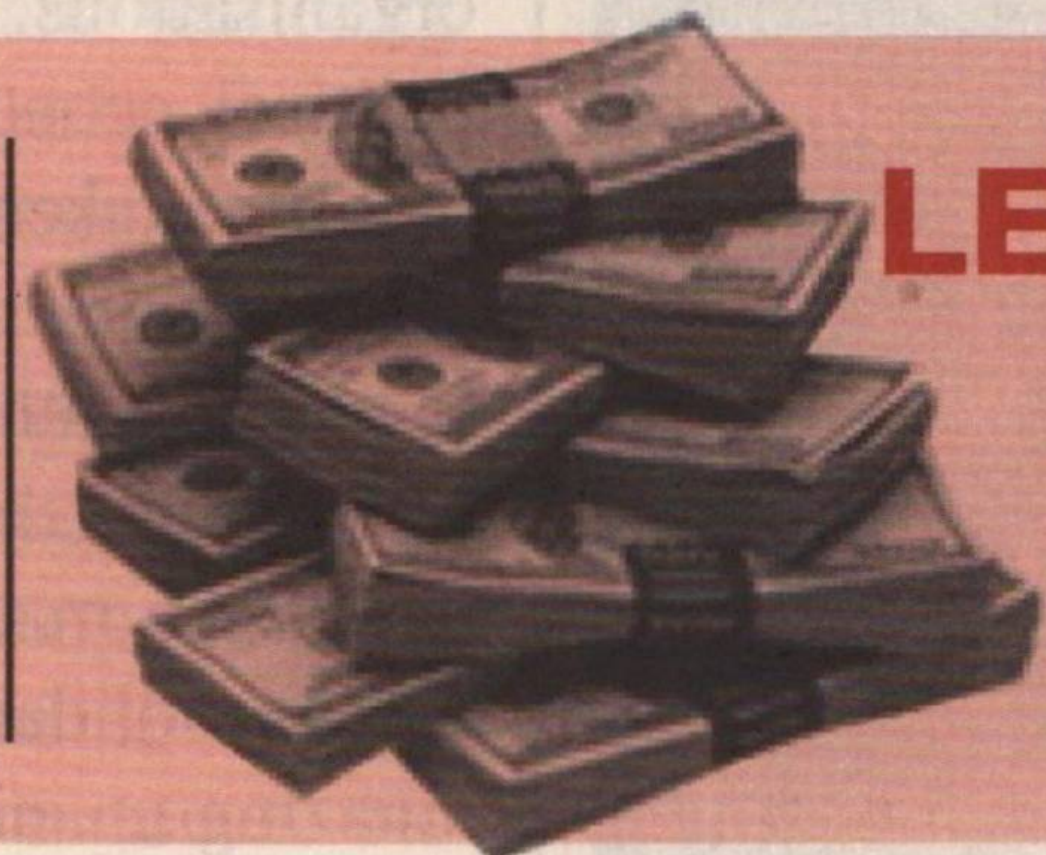
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## BEHIND THE PANIC

The arrest of a number of Algerian refugees on 14th January for allegedly making the poison ricin, and the accompanying death of a Special Branch officer, have led to an ever-intensifying media panic. Strange that this should suddenly happen now, when Blair is having real difficulty selling Bush's oil war to his cabinet colleagues, let alone the public. There have been stories in the media since last year about random terrorists of north African origin.

'Terror attack on Tube planned' was one sensationalist headline in December, though the men arrested for it were later released without charge, like some of those arrested this time. But the releases haven't made it into most of the mainstream media while, with a couple of exceptions, journalists have remained silent on the nature of ricin. This has led people to believe a mass gas attack in the style of Winston Churchill may have been planned.

The truth is that ricin is a lethal toxin. But it has to be delivered into the body to work, so it's a weapon of individual terror or assassination rather than the indiscriminate terror that an F-15, say, is capable of. The most infamous use of ricin was when Bulgarian secret police murdered dissident Georgi Markov in London in 1978, using a poisoned umbrella.

It's perhaps worth speculating why police made such an elemental error when they arrested the men in Manchester. In my experience, they're not slow in handcuffing people. And this was an anti-terrorist operation, which implies they at least thought the men were dangerous. Did someone higher up in Greater Manchester Police tell the officers to go easy, or was it just a cock-up? It's unlikely we'll ever know the full facts, but it's certainly convenient for Blair if he can pretend these men have a link to Iraq. This, however, may prove difficult.

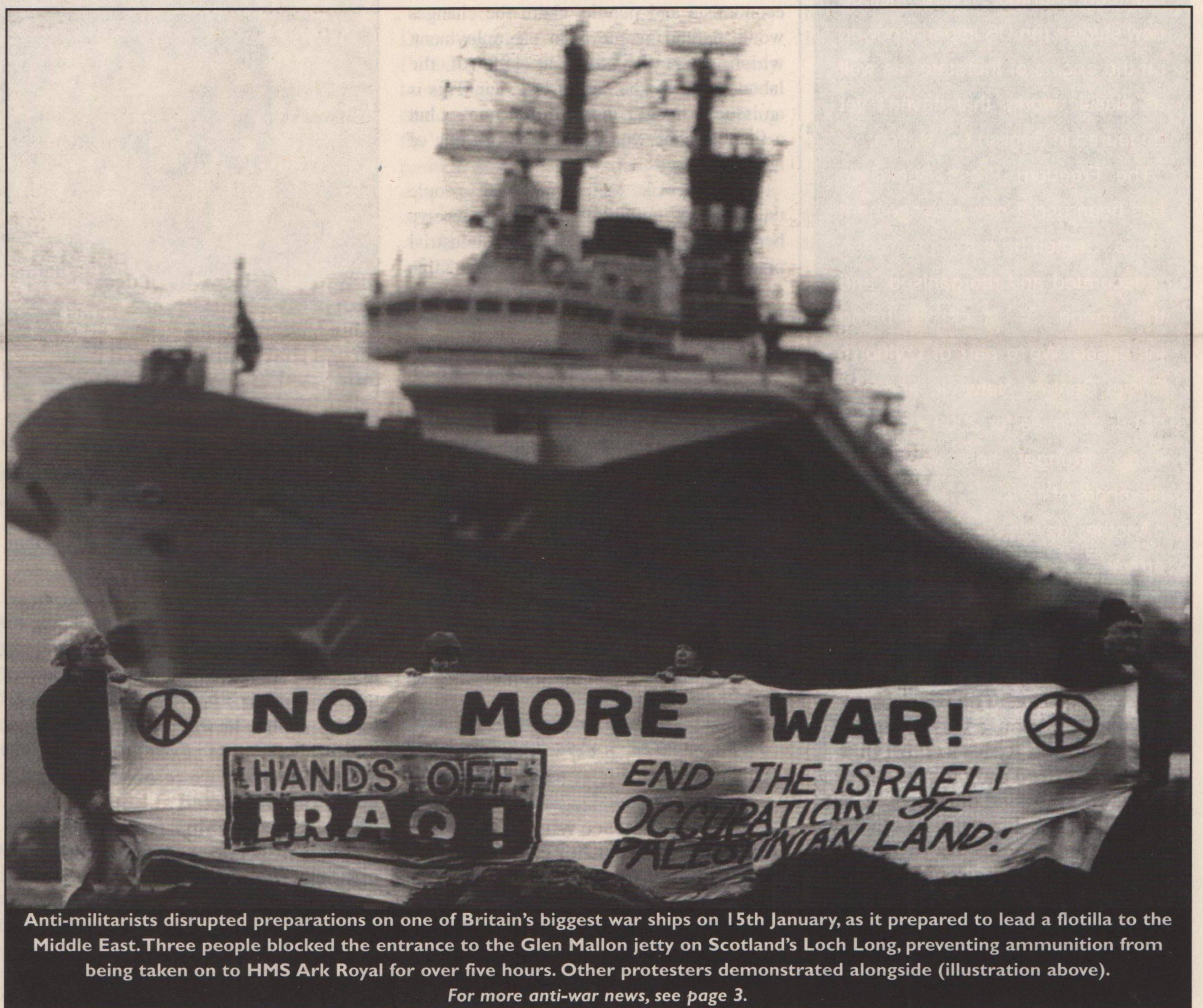
The mainstream media have focused on the number of Algerians coming to Britain and claiming asylum, and how some of them may be terrorists. There's been precious little attempt to understand why Algerians might flee their homeland, why they might turn to terror and why they may not want to go to France.

In 1991, the Algerian generals scrapped elections because the Islamic Salvation Front won them. Since then, over 80,000 people have been slaughtered. European, primarily French, intelligence services knew

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Activists around Britain are working to prevent a major war...

## PUT THE PRESSURE ON



Anti-militarists disrupted preparations on one of Britain's biggest war ships on 15th January, as it prepared to lead a flotilla to the Middle East. Three people blocked the entrance to the Glen Mallon jetty on Scotland's Loch Long, preventing ammunition from being taken on to HMS Ark Royal for over five hours. Other protesters demonstrated alongside (illustration above).

For more anti-war news, see page 3.

### North London

Around 500 activists blockaded the entrance to Northwood military HQ on 19th January in protest against the crucial role it will play in any war against Iraq. Winding through the quiet residential suburbs of north London, the procession to the base was enlivened by a samba band and music from the Rinky Dink bike. Initially Hertfordshire police did the activists' work for them and blockaded the entrance with their vans, giving rise to much mirth and a chant that was to resurface throughout the day: 'police against the war'.

Eventually activists were allowed through and, with one entrance blocked, a number attempted to blockade the second entrance.

Four protesters, who'd locked themselves together with arm tubes, were apparently hauled into a police van while still attached to each other, injuring at least one woman's arm. Police grouped round the rear door of the van to prevent anyone seeing what they were doing inside. A fifth activist was roughly handled behind the van – again out of sight – before being arrested.

The blockade at the first entrance lasted about three hours. It continued until about 3.30 p.m. when police arrested those sitting in the road – around thirty to forty people. Despite having filmed the protesters throughout the demonstration, the police photographed and searched everyone they arrested before putting them into their vans. It was a slow and laborious process that gave

rise to wry complaints about the shoddy customer service the police provided.

Some activists attempted to persuade officers of the error of their ways. One officer said he was only doing his job, but became less talkative when told that this was what the nazis had said about building the railway line to Auschwitz. PC VH2C rather depressingly replied that he was "not allowed to have an opinion" – a circumstance he seemed only too happy about. On a brighter note, another PC volunteered that she'd like to assassinate a number of world leaders (but said she wasn't allowed to say so). Her proposed methods are unsavoury, but was this a glimmer of civil disobedience in the ranks of the police?

Anton Pawluk

## THE YEAR AHEAD

*Freedom* has changed, and this progress will continue in 2003. The format and price stay the same, but what you see now will be replaced in April by a completely new design. Together with some alterations in the balance of our coverage, we hope this will offer you both higher quality and a lighter touch.

Changes are also being made at *Freedom Press* generally. We're planning to resume our (long-stalled) programme of book publishing, with a list of titles we intend to bring out in the next eighteen months. These include new studies (on US imperial power, on the origins of the state) as well as classic works that haven't yet appeared in English translation.

The *Freedom Press Bookshop* has been under new management since September. It's just been redecorated and reorganised, and the range of stock is being increased. We're part of London's Social Centres Network, and one of our priorities for 2003 will be to forge stronger ties with other members of it.

Another development will be the arrival of the new *Freedom Press* website, with a facility for online ordering. Keep your eyes peeled this spring.

Our plan this year is to start working with other publishers, groups and papers more closely. Besides our ideas and our history, solidarity is the anarchists' only strength. *Freedom Press*, like *Freedom* newspaper, should be an indispensable resource for the anarchist movement. But it's a resource that comrades need to use. We've got exciting plans for the future. We invite you to help us realise them, and to bring ideas of your own.

As a start, we need people to come and help in the *Freedom Press Bookshop*. Our aim for this year is to open seven days a week – but volunteers are welcome any day. Get in contact with us at:

FreedomCopy@aol.com or drop in any Saturday.

They're being resisted but hardship and, inevitably, fascism are on the increase as ...

## Poland feels the lash of liberalisation

### Wielkopolska region

During the long years of the Bolshevik regime, Polish workers demanded better working conditions, more pay and freedom of association in their own labour organisations. Nowadays, as a result of the political, economic and technological changes that have taken place, the workers' movement is losing its importance in Polish political life. The authorities and the business elite want to use this fact to take away gains that have been made. In doing so, ex-communist and ex-Solidarity politicians are showing an amazing unanimity.

They've formed an alliance to introduce a so-called 'flexible labour code', which would serve to remove many employees' rights. It would lead to reductions in overtime rates, severance pay and unemployment benefits. It would increase job insecurity. It would allow bosses to dump collective bargaining agreements without consultation. The politicians, economists and pundits claim the changes would defend people from unemployment, which officially stood at 18% of the labour force by the end of last year. This is an issue in many regions of the country, but a flexible code won't mean the opening of new workplaces.

In Wielkopolska there are 250,000 people unemployed, only 22% of whom receive benefits. In the city of Poznań, industrial plants for companies like GlaxoSmithKline are laying workers off. Obviously this decision is influenced first and foremost by their desire for bigger profits. Safety regulations are constantly broken for the same reason. In Wielkopolska alone there were 9,000 workplace accidents last year, including 46 fatalities. Three out of eight health and safety inspections led to workplaces being shut down.

The bosses keep telling us to tighten our belts, to work better and more effectively. It's been the same slogans for years, whichever system was in power. But there's no more work coming, and business pressure groups are demanding a reduction to the (already low) minimum wage as well as the new labour code. It seems they still want to squeeze more out of us.

### Poznań Anarchist Federation

FA, Poznań, PO Box 5, 60-966 Poznań 31, Poland  
rozbrat@priv2.onet.pl

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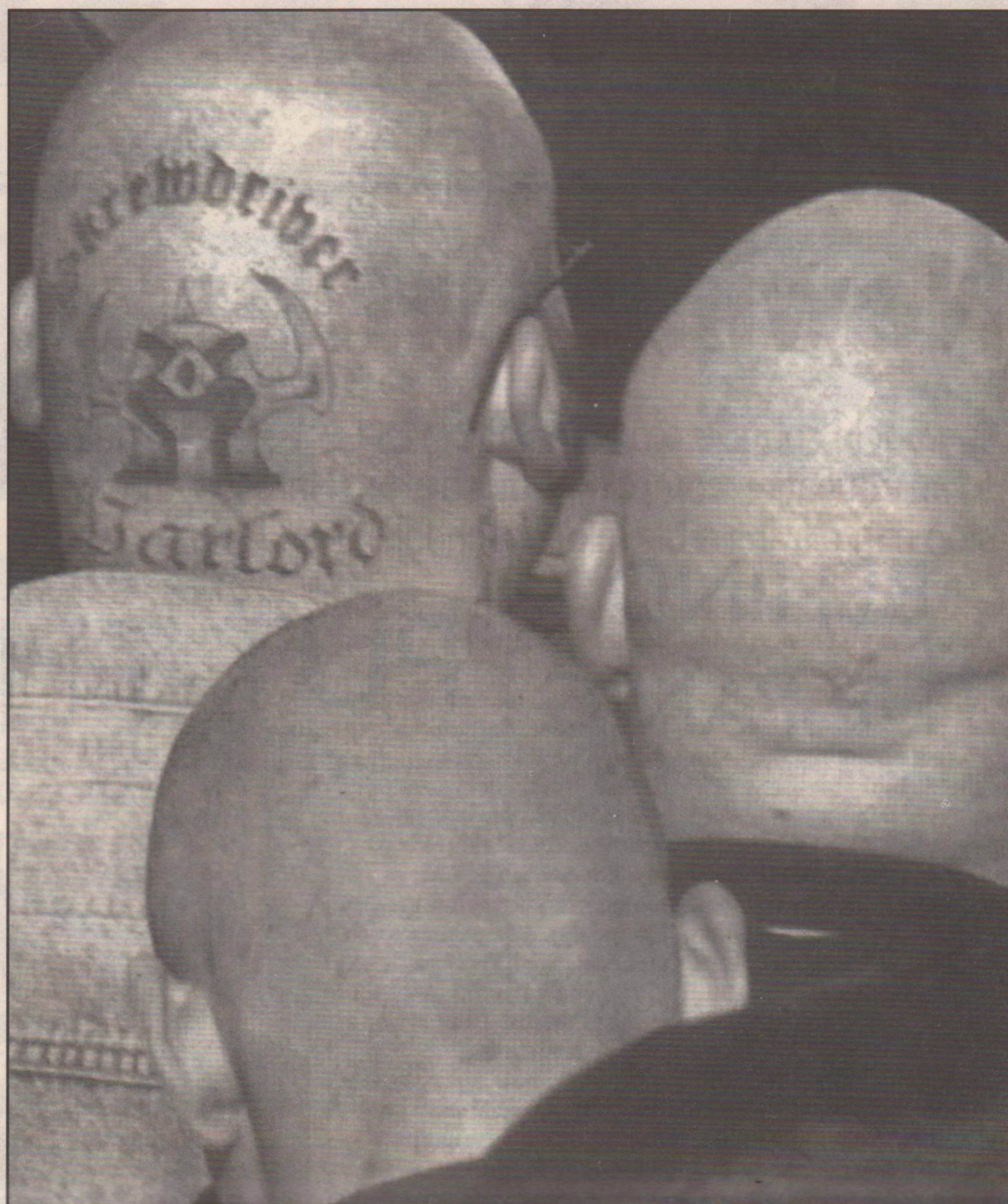
all about this, but guess what – Algeria has oil and gas, so they've kept schtum.

In 1997, *Observer* journalist John Sweeney wrote, "so why the silence? Let us not underestimate the power of the state of Algeria. It squats on huge oil and gas deposits worth billions. It supplies the gas that warms Madrid and Rome. It has a £1.8 billion contract with British Petroleum. No western government wants to make trouble with the state of Algeria. Its wealth buys silence, buys complicity. Since the military junta overthrew the country's democracy, 80,000 have been killed: Europe's gas bill."

The sad truth is that the Algerian military behave in the same way Saddam Hussein does. They suppress all opposition, particularly working class, ethnic and Islamist groups. The only difference is that their paymasters haven't fallen out with them yet.

### Martin H.

• See the current issue of *Black Flag* for a report of the Kabylie revolt against the Algerian military government. Available from *Freedom Press*, price £1 plus 50p postage in the UK, £1 elsewhere.



### Białystok

This is a country like any other. The dangers of nazism and fascism still exist. Far-right organisations and parties are gaining the upper hand and have a significant presence in local and national government. But not everyone is happy with the situation, and some people are resisting.

An organised anti-fascist movement started in Poland in 1992 with the formation of the Anti-Nazi Front in Wrocław, at that time one of the most nazi-infested cities. The movement quickly grew, and by 1994 there were anti-fascist groups in the majority of bigger Polish cities. Some of these groups were just street-orientated, though all of them had a militant character.

Białystok was always full of nazi scum. Before the first anti-fascist groups were organised here, fascists almost totally controlled the streets and the cultural life of the area. This changed when more and more people started to resist them.

In the beginning there were only small groups, but they quickly grew. The spring of 1994 turned out very badly for nazis. March of that year saw the first anti-fascist demonstration and also the first (and so far the biggest) street confrontation between nazis and the anti-fascists. Although they had about three times as many people, the fascists were taken by surprise and suffered many injuries that day.

Since then, anti-fascist demos have become a tradition every March. There have been confrontations almost every year, but most of the time anti-fascists have won. There has also been a widespread tactic of targeting the most active nazis in their homes, workplaces and schools, which was quick to bring positive results. There has been more and more anti-nazi propaganda on the streets, in schools and elsewhere.

At the end of the 1990s, the anti-fascist

movement suffered a serious split when many activists turned towards legal methods of fighting, obviously not understanding that police and the state will never be on our side. Because of this, the militant movement in Poland was reduced to just two or three groups as people became disillusioned and lost hope that things could get better. Meanwhile the nazis weren't asleep and, after a brief period of inactivity, they started their attacks again. Białystok was no exception.

People active in the anarchist and alternative movement were shocked, but resistance quickly re-emerged. In 2000 Radical Anti-Fascist Action (RAFA) was reformed and started regular activity. Our rule is, 'wherever they go, we go as well'. It means we try to stop nazis in any place they appear. Anti-fascist patrols have been formed and they've usually managed, after a few months of hard fighting, to make the area round our squat café safe. They've also stopped or limited nazi activity in many other places. But this hasn't come without a price.

Our current areas of activity are opposition to the growth of 'Fortress Europe', combating state racism (we play a very active part in anti-border camps in Poland) and, of course, permanent opposition to any nazi activity we find in our area. We also use the tactic of permanent pressure on rightwing groups, which forces them to limit – and in many cases to stop – their activities and to take care for their own safety.

We remain as the only street-orientated, militant anti-fascist group in the area, and we claim many successes in combating nazis. But this struggle is international. We know there are comrades around the world fighting the same cause. International solidarity is a must. We welcome support from all militant anarchist and anti-fascist groups.

### RAFA

RAFA, PO Box 43, 15-662 Białystok 26, Poland  
wildeast@poczta.onet.pl

# Hardly a hammering

Regular readers of *Freedom* will have noticed the continuing debate about the extent to which the left and anarchist movement is relevant to, and able to work within, working class communities. As a regular West Ham supporter since I was a kid, I was appalled to see a prime example of how not to go about it at the Newcastle game on 11th January. The signing of Lee Bowyer until at least the end of the season has triggered the emergence of a group calling itself West Ham Fans United Against Racism.

I have a few problems with the focus on Bowyer. He was, lest we forget, found 'not guilty' last year of attacking an Asian student in Leeds. He's being sued by the student, so can't comment on the case regardless of the media clamour for him to do so. An earlier charge of criminal damage is now being presented as racially motivated, even though – again – this allegation formed no part of the trial. The logic seems to be, Bowyer is a white working class lad from Poplar's Teviot Estate so he must be racist!

And even if Bowyer were a card-carrying BNP member, the demo outside Upton Park a fortnight ago wouldn't have helped. Most people can smell bullshit and opportunism, and the idea that a motley crew of SWPers (at least two of them from south London branches) and career anti-racists like Suresh Grover and Unmesh Desai were 'West Ham fans' was a joke. It was the usual soft left rentamob, come to preach to the unconverted.

Why does the left feel it has to express its opinion on issues it has no way of affecting except negatively? Anyone sympathetic to revolutionary politics who went to the game would have been embarrassed and alienated by this farce. By the end, they needed police



He's so good with animals and children

protection even to keep the demo going.

The left lacks credibility in most working class areas, and it's got two choices. It can carry on as normal and repeat fiascos like West Ham United Against Racism, or it can accept that it's starting from a position of weakness and begin to campaign for the relevance of its politics within working class

communities generally. Maybe it could even dirty its hands over issues like poverty, housing and policing, winning itself some credibility and a working class base before it begins to sermonise over issues it knows nothing about and can't presently influence anyway.

Jason Cullen

## Injustice

### North London

Around a hundred people protested outside Tottenham police station on 11th January to mark the fourth anniversary of the death of Roger Sylvester, who died in police custody in 1999. The exceptionally cold weather served to remind people that Roger was carried naked from his home by eight officers. While he was being restrained by them, he fell into a coma and seven days later he died. After the protest the film *Injustice*, about deaths in police custody, was shown at a nearby church.

The officers involved in Roger's death refused to answer questions during an enquiry carried out by Essex police, and a coroner's inquest has yet to be held. This is the longest delay ever for a death in custody on the mainland.

Unsurprisingly the family have no faith in the justice system, saying they can't get on with their lives because of the emotional effect of not knowing what was done to Roger. They don't like the inquest procedure, but say they've no choice but to pursue it. An inquest would be their only chance to challenge the findings of the Essex police investigation, which seems to have found no criminal wrongdoing on the part of arresting officers. None of the eight have been prosecuted.

RSJC

Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign, PO Box 25908, London N18 1WU  
Telephone 07931 970 442 or visit [www.rsjc.org.uk](http://www.rsjc.org.uk)

## ANTI-WAR BRIEF



A big and scary American plane

Anti-war conferences were held in Glasgow and London on **18th January**, and as many as 3,000 people marched through Bradford. Led by the Peace Artists band, they walked from Manningham's Lister Park to a rally in Centenary Square. Over 1,000 demonstrators also gathered in Cardiff for a march. Vigils were held in Birmingham, Nottingham and Mold, north Wales. The organiser of the Mold event, David McKnight, said feeling against the war was growing. "There's a lot more support for us now, and you can tell there are a lot more people who want to get involved".

Self-styled 'weapons inspectors' are due to visit a Gloucestershire nuclear base on **26th January**. Activists from Gloucestershire Weapons Inspectors (GWI) have carried equipment such as hypocrisy detectors and collateral-damage anticipation indicators on previous visits to USAF Fairford, which is the biggest bomber base in Europe. As such

it would play a major role in any war on Iraq. To join the inspection, meet in Fairford High Street at 12 noon. Contact [info@gwi.org.uk](mailto:info@gwi.org.uk) or call 01267 253 479.

There's an anti-war gathering Worthing on **8th February**. This has been organised by the town's new anti-war group, Worthing Against War. One of the groups organisers said when it was set up that the aim was to "reflect the full extent of opposition to war in the area." Meet at 1pm in Montague Place.

The next issue of *Freedom* will be a special anti-war issue for London's anti-war march on 15th February. For details of how to contribute, email [FreedomCopy@aol.com](mailto:FreedomCopy@aol.com) or join the *Freedom* discussion list by emailing [FreedomAnarchistFortnightly-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:FreedomAnarchistFortnightly-subscribe@yahoo.com). To sell the paper on the day, meet outside the entrance to the Royal Festival Hall at 11am or call 020 7247 9249 in advance for a bundle to flog.

## ERM office occupied

### Manchester

The offices of Environmental Resource Management (ERM) were occupied on 13th January in protest at the company's role as consultants on the proposed Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline. This is due to be built by a consortium of firms, led by BP, between Baku in the ex-Soviet republic of Azerbaijan and Ceyhan in Turkey. It will be paid for in part by the British government's Export Credit Guarantee Department.

The campaigners, wearing various approximations on a theme of 'smart clothes', strolled past security and up to the eighth floor of the Salford Quays block where ERM have an office suite. They then carried out an 'Environmental and Social Impact Assessment' to investigate the effects of the occupation, based on the real-life ERM assessment of the pipeline's impacts.

Protesters locked themselves on to office furniture, scampered about, sang songs, 'helped' with the office filing, played hide-and-seek with security guards and generally made a nuisance of themselves for the rest of the day. They also had interesting telephone conversations with senior ERM staff elsewhere. Police sat outside, fuming quietly but prevented from doing anything by the office manager ("it's okay, I'm sure they'll be going soon").

Eventually, having got most of the staff to promise to complain to their head office, the campaigners sauntered home. "One of the most shocking things about this destructive pipeline project is that, if it went ahead, it would be paid for by us, the British taxpayer", one occupier said. "Our government is preparing to stump up £65 million to pay for death and destruction in eastern Europe. They can't find enough money to pay for public sector workers, but they seem to have plenty of cash for oil and war."

This was the latest action in a growing campaign against the pipeline which, according to recent research, would lead to human rights abuses and climate change disaster. Paramilitary units are expected to be set up along its length, allegedly to prevent 'civil disturbance', and many local people will be evicted to make space for it. The positive assessment by ERM of the pipeline's potential impact has been severely criticised by campaigners who say the firm presented the project as certain to go ahead while giving the people affected no option to vote against it.

Scientists also say the oil and gas it carries would produce 177 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year, more than the amount released by all Britain's power stations put together. "Far from acting to help the environment and local people, ERM are just one more company profiting from the pipeline", one of the Manchester invaders said. "But the campaign is growing. Every company involved will be targeted and shamed until the pipeline is stopped". A final decision on whether to go ahead with the project was due to be taken in April 2003, but campaigners have already succeeded in delaying the process by six months. The Manchester action followed a similar one at ERM offices in London last month.

Danny

To find out more or to get involved, contact the Baku Ceyhan Campaign at [ilisu@gn.apc.org](mailto:ilisu@gn.apc.org) or telephone 01865 550 200

Also visit [www.risingtide.org.uk](http://www.risingtide.org.uk)

Manchester Earth First! can be contacted on 0161 226 6814

# FBU's Gilchrist accused of sell-out

Until recently Bob Pounder was Brigade Secretary for Greater Manchester Fire Brigades Union (FBU). But on 5th December, he was told by FBU Vice President Phil Micallef that he was being suspended from his union job for comments he'd made to the press about the firefighters' dispute. He'd previously described FBU leader Andy Gilchrist as a 'disgrace', and accused him of selling out Britain's firefighters. He'd also questioned Gilchrist's ability to lead the union.

Some critics have interpreted Bob's comments as a bid by militants within the FBU to oust Gilchrist, while others have suggested that his comments are typical of his honesty and the passionate views he holds. In this *Freedom* interview, Bob Pounder (speaking in a personal capacity) sets the record straight and explains to **Derek Pattison** why he's seen fit to criticise the FBU leadership publicly.

**Freedom:** You've accused Andy Gilchrist of selling out Britain's firefighters. What are your reasons for saying this?

**Bob Pounder:** Andy Gilchrist made it perfectly clear that our conditions of service weren't for sale. He also made it clear that he wouldn't be taking the FBU down the road to an enquiry. Our pay claim was based on its own merits, which reflected changes in fire service employment over 25 years.

After talks with the Deputy Prime Minister, Gilchrist agreed to meet the employers knowing full well that there was no further money on the table. By doing so, he made it obvious that he was prepared to make concessions to the employers, not in regard to the size of the pay claim, but in terms of 'modernisation', which has always been the employers' agenda. While in talks with the employers, the FBU leadership called off two 48-hour strikes and an eight-day strike. They then realised that the employers had no intention of conceding a substantial pay rise and that they were intending to implement the recommendations of the Bain enquiry.

As they were unable to make progress, the leadership called a 48-hour strike on 13th November. On 22nd November, they agreed to 'binding arbitration' after the employers offered a 16% pay rise which was to be linked to modernisation and phased in over three years. Even though the FBU leadership had offered the employers everything, this wasn't acceptable to the government. Consequently, the first eight-day strike began



The firefighters have been hung out to dry

at 9am on 22nd November.

For me it was clear from the very beginning that the FBU leadership were always prepared to negotiate on pay, but also on the question of our national conditions of service. Everything this union has ever stood for and fought for is now on the table as far as the employers and the FBU leadership are concerned. This is why I believe we've been sold out.

**Freedom:** What, in your view, was the main reason why the FBU leadership suspended industrial action in favour of arbitration through the conciliation service, ACAS? What was the turning point?

**Bob Pounder:** The FBU spent millions on a high publicity campaign. However, when the leadership began to realise what they were up against, they weren't politically up to it. It meant the leadership had to confront the state, which it was unable to do because it's a reformist leadership which seeks to do a deal within the existing system. The FBU leadership isn't up to the task of taking on the government and bringing down the government – this is what the issue is about.

The existing system isn't of a mind to allow the FBU to carry on as it has done these past twenty years, waging a militant campaign to defend our members' interests and standards of fire cover. The fact that Andy Gilchrist is a member of the Labour Party, as are many of the Executive Council (EC) and officials of the FBU, renders it extremely difficult to fight a government which is part of the same party that they belong to, and this informs their approach.

**Freedom:** Do you think this strike has been about bringing down the Labour government?

**Bob Pounder:** I don't think the FBU leadership has intentionally fought to bring down the government. They're trade unionists at the end of the day. My own view is that the government has ultimately raised the stakes because they've said that the FBU must bend the knee or they'll destroy the FBU. I think the conclusion must be reached that, if you're going to take on the government, then somebody must win and somebody must lose and therefore, in that sense, it is about bringing down the government.

**Freedom:** Do you believe the FBU campaign for a 40% pay increase was a realistic and achievable demand?

**Bob Pounder:** To be honest with you, I was surprised when the leadership came out with that figure. It wasn't generated by the membership, but based on a report from the Labour Research Department. Given that many of our members face financial hardship, it seemed reasonable to put forward the 30k pay demand, which was seen as professional pay for professional firefighters. Personally, I'd have argued for police pay parity, I'd have argued that whatever the police earned was good enough for the firefighter.

However, this was a revolutionary demand and if you make such demands you have to fight like a revolutionary. There's no point in having slogans that say '30k now!' and then backing off and saying we'll accept 16% over three years. Moreover, because we couldn't win this strike on our own, the leadership should have appealed for wider trade union support and asked (as a first step) for a day of action to show support. This would have

sent a message to the government that they hadn't just taken on the FBU, but also the wider working class. Talking to ACAS amounts to a defeat in my view, because the FBU leadership has never led a fight.

**Freedom:** In going public with your criticism of the FBU leadership, do you believe that you've helped or hindered the cause of the firefighters during this dispute?

**Bob Pounder:** I don't believe for one minute that I've hindered the FBU at all. I took a decision to make a statement because we'll get nothing from ACAS. I spoke out in defence of the policy of the FBU, a union that I've served for 23 years. I think I've said out loud what a lot of firefighters believe, but at the moment many people can't see a way forward other than to go along with the EC. This position must be challenged and what I've said is the first down payment on a challenge to the leadership and the direction of the FBU. This isn't a moral issue. It's about getting people together to challenge the leadership that Gilchrist and the EC have provided. We must assert our class position over the interests of a trade union bureaucracy that's basically enthralled to a Labour government.

**Freedom:** What reasons did the FBU give for suspending you as secretary of its Manchester branch? How was the suspension implemented? What action are the FBU intending to take against you?

**Bob Pounder:** I first became aware that I was being suspended when the FBU Vice President, Phil Micallef, passed on a message to say that he wanted to speak to me. He told me I was being suspended because of an interview I'd given to the *Manchester Evening News*. My personal computer and mobile phone were then repossessed and I was escorted off the premises like some sacked worker. Two officials were then appointed to replace me. When I eventually received the paperwork, I was informed that I'd been suspended because I'd acted in a way that was prejudicial to the interests of the union. I'm now waiting to be summoned before the EC. I feel that I've done nothing wrong other than criticise the leadership for selling out firefighters. I think the employers are quietly celebrating my removal from office.

**Freedom:** What support have you received from other FBU members? Are you aware of

(continued on page 5)

## Labour's friend

Gilchrist has managed to turn a straightforward industrial dispute into a political one. As there isn't the remotest possibility of the FBU bringing down the government, that leaves two explanations for his motivation. He really is a Scargillite, and wants to lead his members to a similar heroic defeat. Or he's a loyal Labour Party member, and as such is fighting a rearguard action against moves to disaffiliate the FBU from the party. Given that other unions would certainly follow, and that union bureaucrats are, with one single exception, all loyal party members, this would account for the vocal support Gilchrist has had from Monks, Prentice and other rightwingers.

I tend to think the second explanation is more credible. The Labour Party's Campaign Group and its allies from the 57 varieties of

Trotskyism are frightened of nothing more than the party's collapse. For all their talk of a new 'mass party of the left', the realistic ones know that the left is highly sectarian and nobody in it wants to work with anyone else. The reason things turned out different in Scotland is because Militant really were so much bigger than anyone else, and had some success in certain areas at building a real base. They were also prepared to allow factions within their pet Scottish Socialist Party.

There's no chance of anything like that happening in England or Wales. So, despite it being explicitly hostile to the working class, there really is no other show on the road for the left besides New Labour. Of course, this makes fighting within the unions for an end to the Labour Party link even more crucial.

Martin H.

The next meeting of the  
**Northern  
Anarchist Network**

will be on  
**Saturday  
8th February 2003**  
from 10.30am to 5.30pm  
at  
**Merci  
Bridge Mill 5  
22a Beswick Street  
Ancoats  
Manchester M4 7HR**  
further details from  
Harry at 01422 842 558

# Non-violence is no solution



The Palestinians are an occupied people, fighting a war for national liberation. If anarchism is ever going to appeal to them and other oppressed groups, we anarchists must prove that we realise something important – that different social conditions require different solutions. Many people are attracted to anarchism as an ideology because they're repelled by the violence of governments. But to reject all violence, especially in acts of self-defence, is to accept the morality of fascism, that the weak must accept the rule of the strong or, in practice, of those who are most ruthless in their methods of controlling others. We mustn't forget that the greatest advocate of non-violent revolution, Mahatma Ghandi, once suggested that Jews in Nazi Germany should have committed mass suicide in order to bring the world to their aid in sympathy. An act that would merely have saved the Nazis the effort of killing more Jews themselves.

A more moral and relevant argument from that period, which we could all do with heeding, is one put by Reginald Reynolds.

He argued that, if libertarian socialists in imperial states were to have any hope of spreading their ideas, they should support the aims of any oppressed group around the world, so long as the aims were just. And yes, today this might even mean the establishment of a society based on Islamic principles. I'd also add something which was only implicit in Reynolds's thought. We should support methods of resistance where they're both just and necessary.

Many of us living in 'liberal-democratic' states fail to differentiate between the social

controls we live under – largely government through 'manufactured consent' and 'counter-intelligence', and infiltration of our movements – and the blatant mass murder and assassination of 'progressive' movements and their organisers in most of the rest of the world. Non-violence and pacifist means of protest may have some import in a war of intelligence and propaganda, but not in a war against fascists and colonialists. Force must be met with force, at the very least. I think there's a time and a place for non-violence, but Palestine 2003 isn't it. As Ceri Gibbons

said, in an article in this newspaper ('Palestine: an eyewitness report', 14th December), non-violence has been the main form of opposition to Israeli aggression for sixty years, and has attracted neither the world's attention and sympathy, nor meaningful change.

If Palestinians are to gain control of their resources and their lives, they must organise and act in a way that brings about these conditions. This will inevitably necessitate the use of violence. Unless, of course, Israelis suddenly see the error of their ways and give up all power and control. But this, to my knowledge, would be unprecedented in world history. No, I believe that if we're to move forwards, we must reject, not only quotes from the bible (which Ceri referred to), but that whole new testament morality, which tells the poor and oppressed to love those who oppress them and to turn the other cheek (only to receive a blow to the other side of face). To people who want to preach non-violence – please save it for Washington, London and Tel Aviv.

José Martí

**"Anarchism is opposed to any interference with your liberty, be it by force and violence or by any other means. It is against all invasion and compulsion. But if anyone attacks you, then it is he who is invading you, he who is employing violence against you. You have a right to defend yourself. More than that, it is your duty, as an anarchist, to protect your liberty, to resist coercion and compulsion. Otherwise you are a slave, not a free man."**

Alexander Berkman in *ABC of Anarchism*

(continued from page 4)  
any other FBU reps that have been targeted for disciplinary action by the FBU?

**Bob Pounder:** I've received tremendous support from the London region and support from a lot of people that I've known over the years, up and down the country. An open letter from myself was distributed on the Trades Union Congress/FBU march in December, and I know there was a lot of anger about my suspension. I believe that the president of the FBU, Ruth Winters, has sent out a circular to say that my suspension can't be discussed at Brigade and Regional Committees. Derbyshire wanted to put through a resolution supporting me, but their EC member told them it would be ruled out of order. I'm also aware that Andy Gilchrist closed down a computer of London's Regional Organiser, Matt Wrack, because he'd circulated the resolution which supported me on the FBU's internal website.

*Freedom:* Given the FBU's current strategy,

do you believe that cuts in jobs and services are now the inevitable price that will be paid for any extra pay that's awarded to firefighters?

**Bob Pounder:** Given the current strategy it's absolutely inevitable. Neither Gilchrist nor the EC are going to come away from this with any credibility whatsoever. A real challenge has to be made, and I'm looking for support and I'm looking for the opportunity to do that. My life's work within the FBU has been to defend the conditions of service and to fight for strong trades unionism – defeat has never existed for me. I think we should go forward and organise and challenge the leadership, that is what I'm about. In Greater Manchester, we face a £5 million cuts package. Prior to this dispute, we were in a strong and militant position. However, unless something changes, the signal will go out that the FBU is a spent force, and this will strengthen the hand of the management to implement cuts, which will reverberate throughout every brigade in the country.

• The suspension of Bob Pounder from his post as Manchester County Brigade Secretary raises serious questions about the meaning of democracy and freedom of speech within the FBU. Equally concerning are the allegations that the FBU leadership have sought to stop his suspension being discussed at Branch, Brigade and Regional Committees.

No doubt some people within the union will say his suspension was justified because he went public with his criticism of the leadership, and at a particularly difficult time. But can it be right that an official or member of a union should be suspended because he's dared to condemn the willingness of the leadership to abandon union policy in favour of binding arbitration through ACAS? Some might see this as a way of silencing people within the FBU, and an attack on their democratic rights as members. In either case, suspending people for their comments, however critical, is no way of resolving questions of policy within the union.

Derek Pattison

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# More on markets and money

Individualists and communist anarchists both want to end capitalism and create a society in which people can lead their own lives. So Joe Peacott is right to argue that we can't apply the drawbacks of actually existing capitalism wholesale to mutualism ('Anarchist economics', 11th January). But the basic points I raised in my article (same page) apply to any system based on the market mechanism. Indeed, Proudhon himself raised some of the problems and proposed solutions to them. I just tried to show that it's unrealistic merely to say that the 'market mechanism' will solve every problem of economic decision-making.

Joe says that "some form of exchange is essential to human society". But human society existed for thousands of years without exchange and without a market. Even if Joe only means that exchange is essential for modern human society, I disagree. I think human society could be based on sharing. In fact I think sharing is more important than exchange in making a society fully human.

A libertarian communist society would need alternative institutions and attitudes if it was going to work, just like a mutualist society would. We must try to create these alternatives now, no matter how imperfect they are. In other words, Joe is wrong to say I wrote off co-operatives and their history. I just said that, by themselves, they won't abolish capitalism or the state. Joe's support for occupations suggests that he agrees.

When he argues that anarchists should support and encourage working class people to occupy their workplaces and farms, I concur. But this is at odds with the traditional mutualist approach, which stresses competition rather than expropriation as the means of abolishing capitalism (the communist anarchist position).

To reiterate what I think: anarchists should support co-operatives and other alternative economic arrangements. But this should be a complement to direct action and the building of working class fighting organisations, such as community and workplace assemblies and federations.

Joe's right to say that much of the trade union movement is hardly revolutionary and supports authoritarian ideologies. Perhaps this is because anarchists have usually ignored that movement's libertarian potential? In many different countries and at different times, anarchists have succeeded in imbuing a libertarian spirit in numerous unions. Even many British trade unions once favoured workers' self-management over nationalisa-



tion. And libertarian unions like the Spanish CNT and Italian USI created widescale libertarian experiments which still inspire – experiments that have brought us much closer to an anarchist society than the much smaller mutualist ones.

With the failure of capitalism and authoritarian socialism, anarchists should be working to spread their ideas. One of the key ways of inspiring people to change society as a whole is for them to organise to resist oppression and exploitation where they're affected by it. By all means let's support co-operatives, but we must never forget that by themselves they won't create an anarchist society. Only a mass movement which builds the new world while fighting the old can do that. This movement must be rooted in direct action and solidarity in our communities and workplaces, not at the margins of the economy, trying to survive in the capitalist market.

Iain McKay

“Market mechanisms are essential to a working system of exchange. And some form of exchange is essential to human society. Price may be an imperfect basis for decision-making, but it sure as hell beats the dictates of committees and planners.” So says Joe Peacott. But it depends what the committees are set up to achieve, by whom and whether they're subject to immediate recall under a system of self-management. Maybe this is what Joe meant to say.

Planning is absolutely essential to any society, particularly one as complex as ours is at present, and will be in the 'anarchist' future. Who does the planning and under what form of mandate is the point. Market mechanisms (a euphemistic term beloved of capitalist obscurantists) aren't essential, though private barter-type arrangements may be made. Planning for equitable provision is.

I'm somewhat surprised that nobody in this discussion has yet mentioned the participatory

economics project (Parecon). If we're trying to convince people of the validity of our alternatives – by hell we've been trying long enough with little international success – we need to get down to the brass tacks of planning, production, remuneration and distribution. The tendency to throw the mantra 'libertarian communism' into any debate doesn't suffice as an economic argument. It needs defining in order to be convincing.

Roy Emery

South West Solidarity – SolFed

Visit [www.southwestsolidarity.org.uk](http://www.southwestsolidarity.org.uk)

When people talk about anarchist money, are they talking about real money which is worth something and has value, or just about some sort of pretend money, like the toy money children play with? Or do they mean some sort of accounting system for materials and the physical production of goods, which isn't necessarily money at all? If they're talking about real money which is worth something and has value, which in the real world is the sort people who want money usually want rather than mickey mouse money, then in reality this money must be capable of buying things like land, resources and goods, and in so doing it must be capable of commanding the labour of others.

Money with any value implies the existence of property relations. Property relations involve a process of enclosure and commodification, mutual coercion and extortion, accumulation and monopoly by some, with dispossession of others. At the end of the day, these relations involve some form of socially imposed scarcity and alienated labour, otherwise the money wouldn't be able to buy anything of use.

Real money systems in practice only 'work' on the basis of some people accumulating lots of money while the rest don't have enough money, or none at all. If, for instance, everyone were to have lots of money there'd be hyperinflation and money would end up worthless. The image of German children playing with piles of worthless banknotes in the early 1920s springs to mind. Wouldn't anarcho-money go the same way? Will workers be any less dissatisfied with their wages under anarcho-money?

It's a reality that competitive market economics is in itself a form of civil war that ends up with an elite accumulating much of the wealth and the majority of the world's population being impoverished and dispossessed. It's also a reality that, however temporarily preferable they may be to the mainstream system, the majority of radical mercantilist alternatives, like co-ops and LET schemes, fail.

Of those which survive, many have to cling on desperately or they have to become more and more like an ordinary commercial business and cease to be any kind of alternative. As a libertarian communist, I'd much prefer to struggle for alternatives involving free production and distribution, even if a bit chaotic, than be stuck in dependence on the misery of money.

Paul Petard

Money after the revolution? Who knows? I don't. The important thing is to make our relationships as free from coercion as possible, and the only time we can do it now. Let the free society see to itself (it will, whether we like it or not). Perhaps it'll find money or a market that's compatible with liberty. To worry about the subject is a one-way ticket to utopia.

Johnny M.

## CROSSWORD COMPETITION

Thanks to everyone who entered our winter crossword competition. The lucky winner was M. Kirkwood of London, and the prize is on its way.

There'll be another competition crossword in the summer. Don't miss it!

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## His late Lordship

A remarkable number of obituaries for Lord Jenkins of Hillhead have announced that his lordship, who died on 5th January aged 82, was a great libertarian. One gathers that he single-handedly led campaigns for better prison conditions, for an end to hanging and discrimination against gays, for civil liberties and against racism. The funny thing is, during the 1950s and 1960s, when Jenkins was a Labour Home Secretary, I was in the National Council for Civil Liberties, in successive campaigns against capital punishment, in the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Prison Reform Trust. I worked with various anti-racists in Notting Hill after Kelso Cochrane was murdered.

I don't recall ever seeing Woy (as he was commonly known on account of a speech

impairment), whether in a leading role or any other, in any of these campaigns. The politicians I can remember are people like Sydney Silverman (who finally saw through the abolition of hanging in 1964), Leslie Hale and Emrys Hughes.

I could have sworn that I did read reports in the *Guardian* and *Observer* of Jenkins denouncing all these campaigns for being communist fronts, and those of us who worked in them as being woolly-minded fellow travellers. Funny! Memory must play tricks! Of course, since he followed a succession of Tory Home Secretaries and was himself succeeded at the Home Office in 1967 by James Callaghan, he seemed a lot more liberal than them. But, short of Adolph Hitler, who wouldn't?

L.O.

**What we say ...**

As the range of media has increased, so too have the possibilities for dis-information and decontextualisation. Television and the internet try to persuade us we live in a permanent present. They tell us what we see on our screens is 'real', not produced or sifted. They feed us a worldview that comes from the perspective of a particular set of interests – the ruling ones – even though they pretend they don't.

Recent reporting of the ricin scare and the stabbing to death of a Special Branch cop show this process in action. From the point of view of the Home Office and their mouthpieces in the mainstream media, the propaganda opportunities have been far too good to miss. The affair has allowed them to combine fear of 'terror' with hostility to 'asylum-seekers'. It's shit the pigs have been happy to wallow in. What's been clear throughout, if unreported, is that the state has targeted the North African community. Under the pretext of 'investigating terrorism', they've carried out an exercise in mass trawling and intimidation.

Algerian refugees have been portrayed as potential terrorists and north Africans in general arrested and harassed. Reading between the lines a little, the state seems to have conceded as much itself. Official sources behind a report in the *Observer* (12th January) said their 'anti-terror' strategy had now "shifted to a pro-active policy of maximum disruption, smashing suspected cells and even low-level criminal operations such as counterfeiting".

The Manchester raid which led to cop Stephen Oake's death was co-ordinated by immigration officers, with a view to detaining the flat's occupant for deportation. The threat of 'terrorism' is being used as an iron fist to hammer through immigration policing which would normally cause an outcry from civil liberties groups. This is being done as a matter of policy, with two main aims, just like Britain's targeting of the Irish community 30 years back.

It enables police to gather information on a community they distrust (Muslims). And it allows them to intimidate this community in the hope it'll be deterred from engaging in political activity the state dislikes – even though the activity is the predictable resistance to the state's own policies.

Assume, for the moment, that the facts presented are true. Should last week's ricin discovery alter our opposition to Blair's 'war on terror'? Of course the answer's no.

The basis of Islamic militancy isn't 'religious fanaticism' but hatred of the military and economic effects of American and European imperialism. The causes of radical Islam are the west's interference in the Middle East and its support, both for the suppression of predominantly Muslim populations in Chechnya and Kashmir, and for Israel's bloody war against the people of Palestine. Behind these lie the need to maintain the fundamental inequality which is world capitalism.

Our opposition to this system is absolute. Equally absolute is our refusal to meekly fall in line behind the government's agenda, even though the state and the media tell us we must. The policies of British and American governments create victims and suffering around the globe. When action, however reprehensible, is taken by people who claim to act on these victims' behalf, we refuse to support the government against them.

While we oppose Bush, Blair and their respective war aims (real and professed), and while we defend the rights of communities being targeted, there's only one strategy to pursue. We must forge an alliance between workers in the west and the world's dispossessed. The people currently excluded from Fortress Europe are our people.

**Readers' letters****Surprised by Shola**

Dear *Freedom*,

I was surprised to read the attack on humanists by Shola Keenan (letters, 11th January). Granted that humanists don't pursue a utopia, thinking it unattainable, here in Lewisham we've modestly opposed the alternative use of the borough's last cinema – the former Catford ABC – by the United Church for the Kingdom of God (UCKG), a religious group that's associated with exorcism and the abuse of Victoria Climbié.

Opposing exploitation in any form, but especially through superstition, is part of the secular-humanist approach to life. Of course we believe this life is all – an even greater reason for improving it and not looking for a better life beyond it when there's no evidence for the existence of such an 'afterlife'.

We're all part of the community, and humanists have done a great deal to empower people in improving the rites of passage – birth and death ceremonies included. These rites are now used by working class people as much as others.

**Denis Cobell**

*Lewisham Humanists*

Lewisham Borough Council will be considering the church's planning application on 7th February.

Dear *Freedom*,

It's good to see you giving space to criticising the Universal Church for the Kingdom of God. Their purchase of the last cinema in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, in order to turn it into a church, prompted us at Walthamstow Anarchist Group to do a little research of our own into them.

We've managed to dig up quite a lot of dirt on this nasty bunch of profiteers, and have made it as public as possible in our community.

As they're now attempting to open up churches throughout Britain, some of your readers may want to use this information to produce leaflets of their own against them. Contact us for the November issue of our paper, the *Underdog*, or visit our website.

Meanwhile, UCKG zealots are leafletting Walthamstow town centre regularly, in order to establish themselves in the community. We intend to stand next to them and give out our own leaflets as often as possible. As anarchists, we'd rather challenge them at street level than waste time writing letters of opposition to local politicians. If anyone wants to help out, please get in touch. No gods, no masters!

**Pepe Cormano**

*Walthamstow Anarchist Group*

visit [www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk](http://www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk)

or call 07810-288 889

**Future fire service**

Dear *Freedom*,

I'd like to thank Donald Room for his reply to my suggestions about how fire protection could be provided without a state ('Fighting fire', 11th January). But his criticisms of my position were attacks on straw men. His claim that my "call for competing fire brigades resembles privatisation freakery" is somewhat off the mark. Privatisation is the process of selling off state 'property', yet people don't have a right to sell what they don't have a right to own. The state has no right to exist, let alone own property.

In other words, what it calls its property is actually unowned. It becomes the legitimate property of those who first make use of it – the people who work or live there. I think fire brigades should be taken over by firefighters

and related workers instead of being sold off to corporate cronies.

Donald says "fires should be tackled at once, not preceded by research into which fire brigade covers the endangered building", which is true but irrelevant. Before the state set up its monopoly fire service in the nineteenth century, insurance companies offered rewards to whichever brigade put out a fire. Any brigade could do it and be paid via the reward.

I see no need for a single, uniform fire service. In a free society, people would be free to choose which service they subscribed to. The alternative would be to force everybody to join the same one, which doesn't sound very anarchistic.

Donald approves of the fire pumps that were once provided by the Corporation of London. But a corporation is a public body, paid for by taxes which are themselves nothing but extortion by the state. So Donald's 'anarchist-like' fire service was set up by the state and funded by state robbery. Isn't this what anarchists are against?

**Richard Garner**

**SPGB clarification**

Dear *Freedom*,

In response to H.L. querying my use of the term 'other anarchists' (letters, 11th January), I was under the impression that the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) we were talking about was the new-style SPGB, formerly A-SPGB, which produces the paper *Socialist Standard*. It does seem they want some sort of association with us, even if a loose one. I wasn't asking anarchists to support the SPGB's principles and aims.

**Mick Vick**

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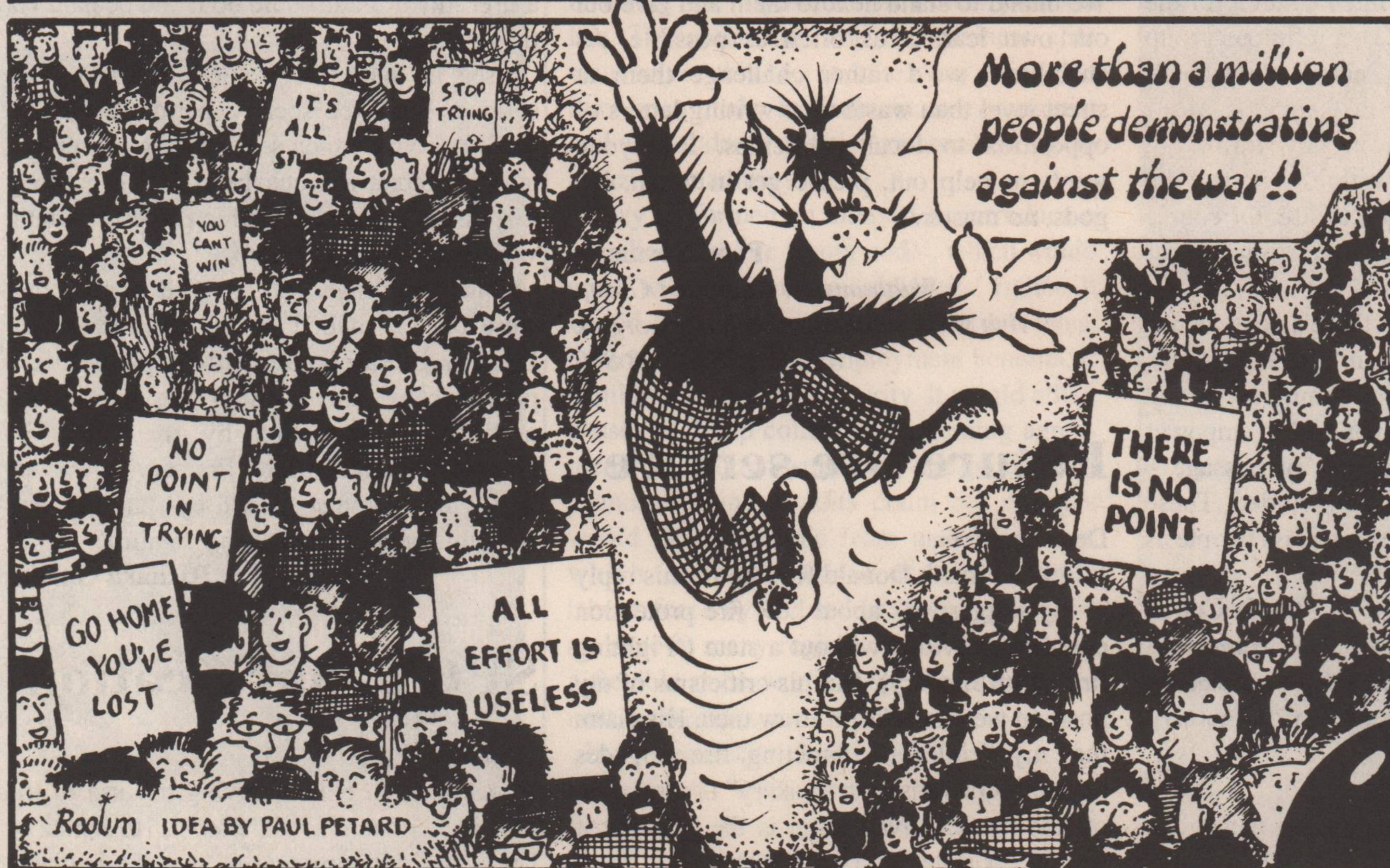
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for more info contact [info@risingtide.org.uk](mailto:info@risingtide.org.uk) • 01865 241 097  
see [www.baku-ceyhan.org.uk](http://www.baku-ceyhan.org.uk)

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**SWANSEA ANTI-WAR DEMO**  
Saturday 1st February from 12 noon  
Assemble at Patti Pavilion for South and West Wales march against the war through town centre to rally with speakers in Castle Square at 1pm  
[swanseacoalition@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:swanseacoalition@yahoo.co.uk) • [cslarkins@hotmail.com](mailto:cslarkins@hotmail.com)

**AF (IRELAND) CONFERENCE**  
Sunday 2nd February from 12.30 to 7pm  
Anarchist Federation conference 'Subvert and Resist' to be held upstairs at the Front Page Bar, Belfast  
contact: [afireland.cjb.net](mailto:afireland.cjb.net) • 00353 086 328 3732

**SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY**  
Sunday 2nd February at 11am  
'Helen McFarlane: revolutionary feminist and translator of Communist Manifesto' (speaker David Black) at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1  
see [www.ethicalsoc.org.uk](http://www.ethicalsoc.org.uk)

**LEICESTER ANARCHIST FEDERATION**  
Tuesday 4th February at 8pm  
Meet upstairs at the Ale Wagon Pub, Charles Street, Leicester  
see [http://www.geocities.com/leicester\\_af/org.html](http://www.geocities.com/leicester_af/org.html)

**BOOKFAIR IN BELGIUM**  
Saturday 29th March from 10am to 8pm  
The third international anarchist bookfair in Gent, Belgium, with stalls from Belgium, France, Germany, UK, Holland  
see <http://www.anarchie.be/abook>

**RADICAL DAIRY SOCIAL CENTRE**  
Get in touch for details of events  
The Radical Dairy, 47 Kynaston Road, London N16  
tel 020 7249 6996 or email [theradicaldairy@hotmail.com](mailto:theradicaldairy@hotmail.com)

**USE YOUR LOAF SOCIAL CENTRE**  
Veggie café every Friday from 7pm  
Infoshop: we have loads of free stuff on many campaigns ring hotline or call in to find out more ...  
Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, London SE8  
Hotline: 07984 588807

**LARC SOCIAL CENTRE**  
many events - check website for details  
The London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES (Whitechapel or Aldgate East tube)  
for more info tel 020 7377 9088 or email [fieldgate@gn.apc.org](mailto:fieldgate@gn.apc.org)  
see [www.londonarc.org](http://www.londonarc.org)

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